

Back-to-School Health Checkup

Here's a primer on exactly what your child needs to have a safe and healthy school year.

Whether your child is entering school for the first time or about to graduate, back-to-school time is a good opportunity for parents to check up on their children's health and make sure they're protected against common childhood diseases and illnesses.

First on the list should be immunizations. Vaccination requirements can vary by state or school district. To find out exactly what's required at your child's school, contact the local school board.

Below are the recommended guidelines that have been approved by the CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the American Academy of Family Physicians.

By Age 2

Vaccination series for the following should be completed by age 2 in all children:

- Hepatitis B
- DTaP (diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis)
- Hib (*Haemophilus influenzae*)
- Polio
- Pneumococcus
- MMR (measles, mumps, and rubella)
- Varicella (protects against the chicken pox virus)



Annual influenza vaccinations are recommended for all infants aged 6 to 24 months since this age group is at substantially higher risk for complications from the flu that may require hospitalization.

A series of hepatitis A vaccines may also be recommended starting at age 2 for children in some high-risk groups or areas. Check with your doctor or local public health department for more information. Annual flu vaccines are necessary because immunity to the flu virus does not persist and the strains of the flu virus change from year to year.

Age 4-6

Boosters are recommended between ages 4 and 6 for the following vaccines:

- DTaP
- Polio
- MMR

Children younger than 9 years who have not previously received the flu vaccine need two doses of the vaccine, given more than one month apart. If possible, the second dose should be given before December. Annual vaccination is recommended after that point.

Annual influenza vaccination is recommended for children who are at increased risk for complications from the flu, including those with asthma or other lung disease, sickle cell anemia, HIV, diabetes, and heart or kidney disease.

Age 11-12

A visit to the pediatrician is recommended at age 11 to 12 to review all vaccinations and make sure all necessary vaccines have been given. A series of hepatitis B, MMR, or varicella vaccines may be given if they were missed or incomplete at earlier ages.

In addition, a combination booster for tetanus and diphtheria (Td) should be given if at least five years have passed since the last Td vaccine.

Although flu vaccines are not specifically recommended for this age group, any child at increased risk for complications from the flu, including those with asthma, sickle cell disease, HIV, diabetes, and heart disease, should receive an annual flu vaccine.

For more information on current vaccination schedules, guidelines, shortages, and answers to frequently asked questions, visit the CDC's National Immunization Program web site or call the National Immunization Hotline at (800) 232-2522 (English) or (800) 232-0233 (Spanish). Source: <http://www.webmd.com/parenting/features/protecting-against-common-childhood-diseases>